

An Educator's Resource Guide on the Inclusion of Students with Severe Disabilities

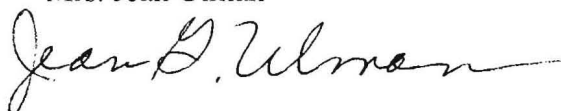
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jean D. Ulman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

November 2011

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2012

## Abstract

Inclusion is becoming common practice in the United States for students with mild disabilities. However, the issue of including students with severe disabilities in the general education curriculum is still controversial; administrators and teachers are fearful because of a lack of knowledge on how to best support students with severe disabilities in the general education setting. In this age of accountability and education reform, high expectations for all students make inclusion of the upmost importance. This resource guide provides web and print resources, thereby providing teachers with a greater knowledge base about how to properly implement inclusion for all students.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mrs. Jean Ulman for guiding me throughout the entire process of my project. Her careful attention to the message I wanted to convey allowed me to produce a thesis that is practical for educators. I would also like to thank the special education department faculty for sharing their extensive knowledge and experiences in the field of special education; their expertise provided me with a strong foundation that inspired me to explore best practices for the inclusion of students with severe disabilities. I am extremely grateful for the life-long support provided by my family and friends; all of you have helped me accomplish my goals.

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## Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 mandates a free and appropriate public education for each and every student in the United States of America. This statute also requires students to receive education in their personal least restrictive environment. The least restrictive environment is the environment that with supports, accommodations, and/or modifications a student can reasonably achieve adequate progress. The student must be educated with his or her general education peers to the greatest extent possible. This mandate has been in place for seven years yet America's schools have chosen to ignore the rights of many students with severe disabilities.

Inclusion is not a place, just as individuals with disabilities fall on a spectrum so do least restrictive environments. The least restrictive environment should be determined after in-depth discussion and consideration of the many options a student and their family has. In the author's experience little to no discussion takes place during case conference committee meetings regarding least restrictive environment. What should be a collaborative process between the student, family, and staff has become a decision that is made before the meeting by simply filling in a box. Too often a self-contained classroom is chosen as the least restrictive environment without much consideration of how successful a student could be even with appropriate supports in a general education classroom.

Inclusion is about respecting each student as an individual with unique strengths and needs. Inclusion is an attitude, a movement for change, and a complex process. Inclusion is not a physical placement in the general education classroom. Rather in inclusive environments each student is being actively engaged in the same material.



Every member in an inclusive classroom is an equal—a valuable member of a team.

Inclusive classrooms focus on the abilities and strengths of each student and provide varied opportunities for each student to succeed. Inclusive educators realize that many students have unrecognized or underappreciated talents and abilities and work to encourage growth in these areas. This guide is meant to help teachers deliver appropriate supports to students with severe disabilities in typical classrooms. The guide provides the teacher with a multitude of web and print resources to use in your inclusive classroom.

See resources on pp. 18–20.

## How to Design the Inclusive Curriculum

### *Universal Design for Learning*

Inclusion at its very core is about Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

According to the Center for Applied Special Technology (2011) the principles of the UDL framework are: Principle 1: To support recognition learning, provide multiple, flexible methods of presentation. Principle 2: To support strategic learning, provide multiple, flexible methods of expression and apprenticeship. Principle 3: To support affective learning, provide multiple, flexible options for engagement.<sup>1</sup> To paraphrase, UDL principles guide curriculum development by providing flexible goals, instructional methods, materials, and assessments. UDL provides choice to students, and ensures all individuals have equal opportunities to learn. A teacher whose curriculum is designed with UDL principles in mind takes into account every student's particular strengths and needs when presenting material, assessing learning, and stimulating interest.

Understanding these principles will help you to have high expectations and appropriate goals for every student. During instruction, you will use methods and materials that support your students. You will be able to design assessments that will accurately reflect your student's talents and abilities. UDL will help you create a classroom environment where each student is respected as an equal—an individual with unique strengths and needs. Your students will benefit from your ability to apply the

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<sup>1</sup> CAST (2011). *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.0*.

principles of universal design. To more closely understand and apply UDL in your classroom refer to the additional resources on pages 21–22.

### *Integrating the Curriculum through Theme-based Instruction*

In the inclusive classroom, theme-based instruction can provide opportunities for students with disabilities to apply their knowledge across several skill areas. Theme-based instruction works by choosing a theme that covers state standards, IEP goals, and objectives. Choose a theme that is engaging for your students and age appropriate. Studying the school's curriculum map can help teachers identify themes across subjects and skill areas.

A theme provides experiences that develop vocabulary, problem solving, and decision-making. Themes can provide the repetition and practice that individuals with disabilities often need. Issues in your local community make great themes and provide opportunities for project-based learning. Through project-based learning many life skills and academic skills can be taught in the same context. Educating the students about issues that are important to their local community gets students involved in their role as citizens. Themes make knowledge relatable to the students' every day lives. Refer to the theme-based curriculum resources on page 23.

### *Incorporating Individualized Education Programs into the Inclusive Curriculum*

Challenging students with severe disabilities is a crucial part of inclusion.

Students with individual education plans should have goals that involve achievement at grade level standards. The level of achievement may not be similar to that of their peers; however, it is still important to align goals to the general education curriculum. Students with severe disabilities can benefit from academics and gain important skills such as literacy and communication through active participation in the general education curriculum.

General education and special education teachers can work together to create a curriculum that suits the individual's needs for academics and life skill instruction. The individualized education plan provides access to the curriculum but is not a curriculum in itself. Analyzing your school's curriculum to determine the basic objectives or essence of standards allows you to identify appropriate goals for students. Goals must be observable and measurable—meaningful objectives that help the student gain greater independence. Aligning goals and academics provides several benefits—students are more prepared for state assessments, students are actively engaged, and students can demonstrate progress in academic content. For additional information refer to the resources on page 24.

## Addressing the Needs of Students with Severe Disabilities

### *Communication and Assistive Technology*

Students with severe disabilities often have trouble with expressive and receptive communication. For students who are blind and have multiple disabilities tactile systems and objects are important for both learning and communication. All students, including students with severe disabilities, have the right to communicate. Without communication students cannot participate in the general education curriculum, or socialize with peers.

The benefits of inclusion are lost if communication is not a priority of staff.

The general education and special education teacher should work together to increase the student's communication. In order for some students to communicate assistive technology may be required; alternative augmentative communication devices allow students to express themselves. Devices can be low or no tech such as paper choice boards or picture communication symbols, or devices can be as technologically advanced as computers.

Alternative augmentative communication devices should be a good match for the individual's strengths and needs. Devices are often abandoned when the individual's needs are not considered. To prevent abandonment an assistive technology evaluation by a professional is often necessary. Transdisciplinary teaming is important when considering students' communicative needs. Professionals such as speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, or physical therapists may be consulted. The feature match process helps professionals and educators find a device well suited to individual

needs. A trial with a communication device is another excellent way to see if a particular device will meet an individual's needs. Please see resources on 25–27.

### *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*

Classroom management is essential to each student's success. Behavior can impede learning and therefore the success of inclusion. Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) focus on changing the environment, not the student. It is based on the principles of applied behavior analysis and prevention. PBIS is a framework to guide professionals in selecting appropriate evidence based behavioral practices to enhance the academic and social outcomes of all students. School-wide PBIS recognizes that classroom management and school-wide discipline should be integrated with effective instruction to create safe environments for learning.

PBIS school systems employ universal screenings to identify students who have difficulties with behavior or social skills. The PBIS system uses a tier approach to target students with at-risk behavior. Continuous data collection is essential to the PBIS model. The data is used to make decisions about interventions; all interventions are evidence-based. Staff work together to collaborate through team-based leadership and continuous effective professional development is provided. These essential characteristics of PBIS systems provide success to students and schools.

Many teachers face great difficulties because of their students' poor behavior. School systems typically have systems designed to punish bad behavior but no systems to teach good behavior. PBIS works to teach students appropriate positive ways to deal with anger through teaching the crucial social skills that students need to be successful and independent. There is no way to compensate for poor social skills; in order to be successful at school, work, or in relationships an individual must have adequate social skills. For more information, see resources on pages 28–29.



## *Differentiated Instruction*

Differentiated instruction allows students at different levels and stages to all actively participate in the same material. By providing opportunities for all students to showcase their talents and abilities, differentiated instruction increases opportunities for success. Teachers can use differentiated instruction in a variety of ways. An important piece of differentiated instruction is providing choices. When students can choose how to demonstrate their understanding of a concept, students are motivated, engaged, and more likely to succeed. For example, a teacher allows students to choose between a multiple-choice test, essay, poem, rap, video, or art piece as a way to assess their knowledge after a unit. In another example a teacher provides a list of several assessment activities, each worth a small amount of points; e.g. one to three; then each student has to accumulate ten points using any combination they choose. Students often do their best work when provided choices.

Other ways to differentiate instruction include the use of project based learning or cooperative learning; both of these methods are discussed in greater length in this guide. Centers or stations can also provide opportunities for students to learn about the same concept in different ways; targeted small group instruction at centers does not single out students. Organization and routine occur naturally through centers and stations. Focusing on active learning and higher order thinking skills increases student engagement. Using diverse questions allows students to provide a wide range of responses from concrete to abstract. By creating questions that can generate a variety of acceptable responses, students and teachers are more likely to be satisfied with the learning outcomes. Refer to resources on pages 30–31.

## Promising Strategies for Inclusive Education

### *Co-teaching and Collaboration*

Co-teaching is an option that schools can use to deliver services in inclusive classrooms. Co-teaching involves a general educator and a special educator working together to teach an inclusive class. This means the two teachers plan, instruct, and assess together. As with any relationship, co-teaching takes communication, time, and a lot of effort. Support from school administration is essential to successful co-teaching. Here are three important tenants the author has identified for successful co-teaching:

**Time:** Co-teachers must have time to plan instruction together. Each teacher should know the details of what is being taught, when, and by whom. Teachers should develop a professional relationship with each other. Taking time for professional development is also important; for example, discussing a research article, attending a conference on inclusive practices, or meeting with other co-teachers.

**Open mind:** General education and special education teachers may have stereotypes about each other. Co-teaching does not work if one teacher values their expertise more than the other teacher. The general education teacher may know more of the content, and the special education teacher may know more strategies. One teacher may have many more years of experience than the other. It is important to discuss your strengths, weaknesses, and needs with your co-teacher. Make sure each of you feels valued. Also, try to push your comfort zone. For example, if the special education teacher may feel inexperienced in science concepts, she should take time to study the concepts and prepare a lesson. Role-reversal is refreshing and helps the students understand that both teachers are equals.

Models: Understand the different models of co-teaching and apply many. Your inclusive classroom will be very different from any other inclusive classroom; therefore, trying a variety of instructional strategies and models of co-teaching will be necessary. Both teachers should take time to read about inclusive education (models, strategies, effectiveness) and discuss new ideas. When co-teachers use many different models of co-teaching students benefit. For more information, see page 32.

### *Cooperative Learning:*

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy that uses heterogeneous groups to improve student's understanding of a concept. Students of all abilities are successful contributing members in cooperative learning groups. Essential characteristics of cooperative learning include positive interdependence and individual accountability. Cooperative learning groups boost self-esteem through a sense of belonging and security. Cooperative learning focuses on social skills and academic instruction. Many students with disabilities need explicit instruction in social skills; cooperative learning provides varied opportunities to practice social skills in authentic contexts. Communication is yet another access skill that is encouraged through cooperative learning.

Educators are responsible for designing cooperative learning activities that will allow groups to achieve positive interdependence and monitor individual accountability. Assigning roles that are essential to completing the task to each individual student creates positive interdependence. Examples of roles may include leader, presenter, timekeeper, recorder, errand monitor, summarizer, advice seeker, and many others. Teachers should explain roles and responsibilities to students. Providing students with role cards remind students of their essential responsibilities.

Roles can act as invisible accommodations or effective ways to monitor life skill goals. For example, a student has difficulty writing, the teacher should make sure that the student is not the recorder. Now the student with a disability is participating in the same activity as everyone else without the accommodation of a scribe. A student may have a goal on their individual education plan about telling time. A perfect way to target this

goal in the general education classroom would be through cooperative learning; this student could be the timekeeper for his or her group.

When designing cooperative learning activities, teachers should plan to assess individual understanding as part of the lesson. Teachers may have students complete homework, write individual responses in journals, take a test, or complete any other assessment. Checking for individual understanding of the academic and social skill objectives targeted in any cooperative learning group is essential. Rubrics can be used to assess both social and academic objectives during cooperative learning activities.

During cooperative learning activities, the teacher monitors individual and group progress on academic and social objectives. Educators answer questions during the activity and provide feedback to individual students and groups. Monitoring and data collection is an important piece to implementing any teaching strategy. By monitoring group behavior, teachers will gain insight on how different group or room arrangements may prove more successful in the future. Many different structures of cooperative learning groups exist. Trying a variety of structures will help educators identify one appropriate to his or her classroom. For more information, refer to pages 33–35.

## Resources

### *Introduction Resources*

Bolay, J. Including students with Multiple/Severe Disabilities in the General Education Classroom: Tips and Resources for Teachers, *Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities*. Retrieved October 7, 2011, from [http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy\\_files/InclusionofStudentswithSevereDisabilitesi ntheClassroomTipsandResourcesOct2010.pdf](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy_files/InclusionofStudentswithSevereDisabilitesi ntheClassroomTipsandResourcesOct2010.pdf)

Summary: This tip sheet provides some ideas of simple accommodations or modifications to increase access to the general education classroom for students with severe or multiple disabilities. Also provided is some information on peer buddy supports and assistive technology. The Kennedy Center provides a multitude of resources on a variety of topics regarding students with developmental disabilities.

Downing, J., & Eichinger, J. (2003). Creating Learning Opportunities for Students With Severe Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 36(1), 26-31.

Summary: This article provides suggestions on how to create learning opportunities in the general education classroom for students with severe disabilities. This article encourages the teacher to ask him or herself questions about how the student can build communication and social skills across different tasks. The article also provides a list of web and print resources valuable to the inclusive educator.

Downing, J. & Eichinger, J. (2008). Including students with severe and multiple disabilities in typical classrooms: practical strategies for teachers. Brookes Publishing Company.

Summary: The authors provide the evidence base for including students with severe disabilities in the general education environment, and discuss how to best support students in this environment. Also provided is information on inclusion at specific age levels and discusses the essential role of peers in successful inclusion. The authors provide solutions to common concerns, ideas for collaboration, and ways to monitor progress. An educator will find this book extremely useful because of the many authentic examples and resources.

Kennedy, C., & Horn, E. (2003). Including Students with Severe Disabilities. Pearson Education.

Summary: This book consists of two parts; important issues in inclusion, and inclusion at different stages in life. Provided is a useful description of the needs of many students with severe disabilities. For the educator who has not worked with students with severe disabilities before this resource provides important background knowledge. An educator will value the many real examples of students and schools participating in inclusive environments. With a focus on collaboration amongst professionals, families, and paraprofessionals this book provides educators with important recommendations.

Wolfe, P. & Hall, T. (2003). Making Inclusion a Reality for Students With Severe Disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 35(4), 56–61.

Summary: In the article are practical suggestions for implementing inclusion for students with severe disabilities. Full of examples of how the general educator and special educator can collaborate in designing access to the general education curriculum, this article will be extremely beneficial for collaborating teachers. These authors clearly dictate what inclusion is, how to do it, and the roles of professionals and the individualized education plan.



*Universal Design for Learning Resources*

CAST: About UDL. (n.d.) *CAST: Center for Applied Special Technology*. Retrieved November 15, 2011, from <http://www.cast.org/udl/index.html>

Summary: Founded in 1984, the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) is a nonprofit organization whose main mission is to expand learning opportunities for all individuals through UDL. The website contains a wealth of information for educators about what UDL is, why it is important, and how to implement the principles of UDL.

CAST: Learning Tools. (n.d.) *CAST: Center for Applied Special Technology*. Retrieved November 15, 2011, from <http://www.cast.org/learningtools/index.html>

Summary: Educators will find this section of the CAST website especially useful. This section provides many free tools for teachers like the curriculum self check, book builder, teaching every student, online modules, and lesson builder. There are also many free tools for students such as the science writer, strategy tutor, and book builder.

Jackson, R. (2005). *Curriculum Access for Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities: The Promise of Universal Design for Learning*. Wakefield, MA: National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum. Retrieved November 11, 2011 from <http://aim.cast.org/learn/disabilityspecific>

Summary: The author provides educators with an in depth discussion of principles of UDL and how they pertain to students with severe or low incidence disabilities.

Specifically, the article details why districts are challenged when serving students with low incidence disabilities, what current planning models and curricula are in use for

students with low incidence disabilities, and how individualized education plans (IEP) can be used to gain greater access to the general education curriculum.

Rose, D., & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the Digital Age: universal design for learning*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Summary: The authors discuss the concept and practical applications of universal design for learning. The book is full of pictures, charts, diagrams to provide examples of concepts for teachers, and templates that are practical for planning instruction and designing curricular materials. This book is also available in an online format for free at <http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/ideas/tes/>

*Integrating the Curriculum through Theme-based Instruction Resources*

Reading/Language Arts Center: Cross-Curricular Thematic Instruction. *Education*

*Place®*. Retrieved December 1, 2011, from

<http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/res/vogt.html>

Summary: Educators will gain understanding of the essential elements of thematic instruction and how to plan their thematic curriculum after reading this online source.

Citing a large body of resources, educators can feel confident that research supports thematic instruction. With a detailed explanation of advantages to using themes, teachers will be inspired to integrate thematic-instruction in their curriculum. Also provided is an example evaluation sheet that can guide student-teacher conferences and serve as an informal assessment, and an example planning web that can assist educators in planning theme-based instruction.

Thematic Instruction | Researched-Based Strategies | Focus on Effectiveness. (n.d.).

*Northwest Educational Technology Consortium*. Retrieved December 1, 2011,

from <http://www.netc.org/focus/strategies/them.php>

Summary: The Focus on Effectiveness website provides detailed descriptions of twelve core strategies to increase student achievement. Educators will find this website helpful in designing research based instruction that engages learners. This valuable resource on thematic instruction carefully explains the research-based steps of implementation for theme-based instruction. Also provided, are related organizing resources, technology tools, and authentic classroom examples. Educators will feel confident in their ability to design thematic instruction after reading this resource.

*Incorporating Individualized Education Programs into the Inclusive Curriculum*  
*Resources*

Browder, D., & Spooner, F. (2006). *Teaching Language Arts, Math, & Science to Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities*. Brookes Publishing Company.

Summary: The authors provide practical suggestions for how to teach academics to students with severe disabilities. This book will help teachers provide meaningful instruction to students with severe disabilities. Everything from access, instruction, and assessment is covered in great detail. Teachers will appreciate the valuable information and concrete examples provided by adapted lesson plans.

Courtrade, D., & Browder, D. (2011). *Aligning IEPs to the Common Core Standards for Students with Moderate and Severe Disabilities*. Attainment Company.

Summary: Students with severe disabilities who participate in the general education curriculum should have an individual education program (IEP), which encourages progress toward grade level academic standards. Sometimes educators find it difficult to align the IEP to grade level content. The authors guide teachers through the process. Filled with examples, educators will find this resource extremely helpful in planning goals and objectives to promote progress in the general education curriculum.

### *Communication and Assistive Technology Resources*

ATTO: Assistive Technology Training Online. (n.d.) *ATTO: Assistive Technology Training Online*. University at Buffalo The State University of New York, Retrieved November 28, 2011 from <http://www.atto.buffalo.edu/>

Summary: This website provides a variety of resources about assistive technology. Teachers are guided on how to identify appropriate solutions for different situations. The tutorials provide educators with the knowledge about how to use various assistive technology products. As the website is extensive the author recommends browsing through the site map to locate relevant information.

Gierach, Jill. WATI.org : Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative. (n.d.). *WATI.org : Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative*. Retrieved November 28, 2011 from <http://www.wati.org/index.php>

Summary: The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative provides educators with a multitude of resources. Available through the support section of the website, is a long list of free publications available to educators. An entire book on assessing students' needs for assistive technology is available. One chapter specifically discusses assistive technology for students with multiple challenges. The classroom materials section has a variety of resources by age level or subject, and the early childhood section provides access to six thematic literacy units that guide teachers on how to use communication boards.

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons With Severe Disabilities. (1992). *Guidelines for meeting the communication needs of persons with severe disabilities*. Available from [www.asha.org/policy](http://www.asha.org/policy) or [www.asha.org/njc](http://www.asha.org/njc).

Summary: This committee's website has a multitude of resources for educators and professionals about the communication needs of persons with severe disabilities.

Important resources include the communication bill of rights, evidence-based communication interventions for persons with disabilities, resources for teams serving individuals with severe disabilities, and guidelines. Educators will find the published articles and products and presentations valuable; these resources would also be very useful to the speech language pathologist on your transdisciplinary team.

PATINS Project. (n.d.). *PATINS Project*. Retrieved December 1, 2011, from <http://patinsproject.com/>

Summary: The PATINS project has been developed for the state of Indiana to assist local education agencies in their efforts to create accessible learning environments for all students. You can locate your regional PATINS organization. On the website is a searchable lending library catalogue with a wide variety of assistive technology devices. Training tutorials are provided for professionals and families. The Rapid Fire blog provides weekly tips, and tricks to assist educations with UDL and assistive technology.

Rowland, C., & Schweigert, P. (n.d.). Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students With Disabilities: Instructional Practices. *OSEP Ideas that Work*. Retrieved December 1, 2011, from [http://osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/InstPract\\_tan\\_sym.asp](http://osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/InstPract_tan_sym.asp)

Summary: An incredible resource for educators, speech language pathologists, and family members who work with students with multiple or severe disabilities, this highly detailed and informative resource guide provides educators step by step directions through the process of using tangible symbols as a form of communication for individuals with severe disabilities. Important concepts such as motivation, assessment, data collection forms, and activities are clearly explained. Educators will be able to easily envision how tangible communication symbols can look like in their classroom thanks to the outstanding pictures of systems used with students.

### *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Resources*

Behavior Forms. (n.d.). *Special Education IEP Forms - convert your special education Individual Education Program forms into electronic forms templates (IEP Templates)*. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.ledweb.com/fba%20forms.htm>

Summary: This website provides free forms to assist teachers in conducting functional behavior assessments or other crucial components of positive behavioral interventions and supports. These forms are compatible with both Macs and PCs. Example forms include a positive behavior intervention plan, crisis/emergency plan, competing behavior pathway, functional assessment interview, and ABC observation form.

Home. (n.d.). *OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports*. Retrieved November 12, 2011, from <http://www.pbis.org/default.aspx>

Summary: This website is the ultimate resource for schools and teachers who want to implement PBIS. Detailed descriptions of what PBIS is and looks like are provided. With a multitude of resources available through their catalogue, professionals will find a wealth of reading material. Also available on the website are blueprints for school wide PBIS. Tools are provided to help schools evaluate and reflect on their system. A training manual on how to perform practical functional behavior analysis is provided for free. Through the website you can locate your state's PBIS coordinator.



Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports | LD Topics | LD OnLine. (n.d.). *LD*

*OnLine: The world's leading website on learning disabilities and ADHD.*

Retrieved December 12, 2011, from <http://www.ldonline.org/article/6035>

Summary: This brief description of PBIS provides a rationale as to why PBIS is important to educators. Also listed are key principles of practice. For people who have little to no experience with PBIS this resource will briefly explain the basics.

### *Differentiated Instruction Resources*

Kluth, P., & Danaher, S. (2010). *From Tutor Scripts to Talking Sticks: 100 Ways to Differentiate Instruction in K-12 Inclusive Classrooms*. Brookes Publishing Company.

Summary: This book is full of brilliant easy-to-use suggestions on how to differentiate instruction. Educators will have fun reading this bright and colorful book, full of illustrations and pictures, you can see what differentiated instruction could like in your classroom. Paula Kluth has authored numerous books on inclusion, differentiated instructions, and students with autism. As an expert, advocate, and author, Paula provides excellent advice and suggestions for all educators. The author highly recommends any of her resources.

Kluth, P. (n.d.). *Differentiating Instruction. Paula Kluth: Toward Inclusive Classrooms and Communities*. Retrieved November 29, 2011, from <http://www.paulakluth.com/readings/differentiating-instruction/differentiating-instruction/>

Summary: Paula Kluth's website is full of short readings that provide immediate ways to change your classroom into a more inclusive environment. This particular reading provides background information on what differentiated instruction is and how to use it. Full of authentic examples and success stories this website will inspire teachers everywhere to use differentiated instruction.

Kluth, P. (n.d.). *Differentiation Daily*. *Differentiation Daily*. Retrieved November 29, 2011, from <http://differentiationdaily.com/>

Summary: This blog focuses specifically on sharing ideas on how to differentiate instruction. Any educator will be amazed at the creativity and variety of ideas featured daily. The posts are easily organized by subject area so no matter what you teach you will find information relevant to your classroom and situation. For the busy educator, following a blog is a quick, easy, refreshing way to introduce innovative ideas in the classroom.

### *Co-teaching and Collaboration Resources*

Murawski, W. W., & Dieker, L. (2008). 50 Ways to Keep Your Co-Teacher: Strategies for before, during, and after Co-Teaching. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 40(4), 40-48.

Summary: Through the use of mnemonics and humor, the authors help educators remember practical strategies for developing a collaborative relationship among co-teachers. The authors of this article understand that it can be difficult to maintain and grow a co-teacher relationship. Both experienced and in-experienced co-teachers will find this article extremely beneficial. This article offers a plethora of websites, books, training sessions, and other resources to help increase your co-teaching effectiveness.

The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements. (n.d.). *Collaboration: Information Briefs: Collaboration: A Must for Teachers in Inclusive Educational Settings*. Retrieved November 28, 2011. <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>

Summary: The essentials, characteristics and prerequisites of collaboration are explained in this brief. Different models of co-teaching and other collaborative practices are clarified. Educators will find this brief and many other briefs available from the IRIS center to be extremely beneficial. Briefs provide a great deal of useful information in a clear and concise way that saves educators' valuable time.

### *Cooperative Learning Resources*

Cooperative Learning Cue Cards. (n.d.) *Homepage - ReadWriteThink*.

Read.Write.Think., Retrieved November 6, 2011 from

[www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson277/cooperative.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson277/cooperative.pdf)

Summary: This is an example of a set of cue cards that you could use in your classroom during cooperative learning group activities. These cue cards state the name of the role, responsibilities, and sound bytes. Read.Write.Think. provides a variety of extremely beneficial resources for educators; the easy to navigate resource bank provides a vast amount of free lesson plans and units.

Cooperative Learning. (n.d.). *Kennesaw State University*. Retrieved December 1, 2011,

from <http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/cooperativelearning.htm#activities>

Summary: This website explains a variety of cooperative learning structures and ideas for implementation in the classroom. Visual graphics, general background information, essential elements, and effectiveness of cooperative learning make this website a valuable resource for the educator who wants to begin implementing cooperative learning in their classroom.

Cooperative Learning Rubric. *Homepage - ReadWriteThink*. Read.Write.Think.,

Retrieved November 6, 2011 from

[www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson95/coop\\_rubric.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson95/coop_rubric.pdf)

Summary: This is an example rubric that assesses a student's participation in a cooperative learning group. The rubric provides a box for comments, suggestions, and

student/teacher signatures. Educators could use this rubric to guide conferences with students about ways they can improve their social skills including teamwork, communication, and encouragement.

Kagan, S. Seventeen Pros and Seventeen Cons of Cooperative Learning Plus Ten Tips for Success. *Kagan Online*. Retrieved December 1, 2011, from

[http://www.kaganonline.com/free\\_articles/dr\\_spencer\\_kagan/ASK06.php](http://www.kaganonline.com/free_articles/dr_spencer_kagan/ASK06.php)

Summary: This article provides very practical advice for teachers wanting to fully understand cooperative learning and successfully implement it in the classroom. Dr. Stephen Kagan's work is dedicated to helping educators design cooperative, interactive learning environments. This article and many other free articles on his website make great professional development resources. The author also recommends Dr. Kagan's book on cooperative learning, the first chapter is provided for free on his website.

McMaster, K. (2005) Cooperative Learning. *Teaching LD Current Practice Alerts*, Issue

11, Retrieved from [http://s3.amazonaws.com/cmi-teaching-](http://s3.amazonaws.com/cmi-teaching-ld/alerts/8/uploaded_files/original_alert11.pdf?1301000897)

[ld/alerts/8/uploaded\\_files/original\\_alert11.pdf?1301000897](http://s3.amazonaws.com/cmi-teaching-ld/alerts/8/uploaded_files/original_alert11.pdf?1301000897)

Summary: This alert discusses the empirical evidence behind cooperative learning. Empirical evidence encourages educators to use caution when implementing cooperative learning with students with disabilities. The alert discusses ways to increase the effectiveness of cooperative learning for students with disabilities. To help cooperative learning be effective for students with disabilities careful attention to assignment of roles and groups is necessary. Explicit instruction in the academic and social skills necessary to

cooperative learning will be essential for students' success. This alert and the other alerts provided allow educators to quickly understand the research behind instructional strategies for students with disabilities.